

Hollins University

## Hollins Digital Commons

---

Mildred E. Persinger Papers

Manuscript Collections

---

1974

### United Nations Calls on Member States to Make Significant Progress for Women During 1975--International Women's Year

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.hollins.edu/persinger-papers>



Part of the [Women's History Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

"United Nations Calls on Member States to Make Significant Progress for Women During 1975--International Women's Year" (1974). *Mildred E. Persinger Papers*. 261.  
<https://digitalcommons.hollins.edu/persinger-papers/261>

This Government/NGO/Court Document is brought to you for free and open access by the Manuscript Collections at Hollins Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mildred E. Persinger Papers by an authorized administrator of Hollins Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [lvilelle@hollins.edu](mailto:lvilelle@hollins.edu), [millerjc@hollins.edu](mailto:millerjc@hollins.edu).



*Centre for  
Economic and Social  
Information*

OPI/CESI NOTE IWY/7

7 May 1974

---

UNITED NATIONS CALLS ON MEMBER STATES TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS  
FOR WOMEN DURING 1975 -- INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

---

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 1975 International Women's Year, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim, has urged nations to use the Year to make significant progress for women's rights and to extending their participation in development efforts.

On 6 May, the Secretary-General addressed an International Meeting of Non-governmental Organizations in New York which discussed co-ordination of plans for International Women's Year 1975.

Mr. Waldheim said: "It is important that everyone gives serious attention now to International Women's Year 1975 and to how the role of women in society could be substantially improved all over the world. We are talking, after all, about half of the world's population, and we must think positively about how the position of women in their own societies and in international affairs could not only be improved, but their large potential contribution be better utilised for the benefit of all."

The importance of the Year was also emphasized by Ms. Helvi L. Sipilä, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, who told the meeting on 7 May that International Women's Year will "begin a new era when all of humanity, not half of it, will participate in the effort to solve the problems facing the world today".

In her statement, Ms. Sipilä asked: "How can the world solve its increasing problems of economic and social development, and improve the quality of human life, when hundreds of millions of its children, the new generation of mankind, are born to illiterate, uneducated, untrained mothers who traditionally are responsible for the upbringing of children? How can the world increase its food production, when agricultural work is still in large areas of the world, mainly the responsibility of women, who are not only untrained and unequipped, but have to do this work in addition to their heavy responsibilities as mothers and homemakers? How can the world solve its population problems... if women do not change their reproductive behaviour?

"International Women's Year will be a time to translate into action the principle of equality of men and women, clearly stated in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, without which no development effort is likely to succeed," Ms. Sipilä added.

(more)





*Centre for  
Economic and Social  
Information*

OPI/CESI NOTE IWY/7

7 May 1974

---

UNITED NATIONS CALLS ON MEMBER STATES TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS  
FOR WOMEN DURING 1975 -- INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

---

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 1975 International Women's Year, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim, has urged nations to use the Year to make significant progress for women's rights and to extending their participation in development efforts.

On 6 May, the Secretary-General addressed an International Meeting of Non-governmental Organizations in New York which discussed co-ordination of plans for International Women's Year 1975.

Mr. Waldheim said: "It is important that everyone gives serious attention now to International Women's Year 1975 and to how the role of women in society could be substantially improved all over the world. We are talking, after all, about half of the world's population, and we must think positively about how the position of women in their own societies and in international affairs could not only be improved, but their large potential contribution be better utilised for the benefit of all."

The importance of the Year was also emphasized by Ms. Helvi L. Sipilä, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, who told the meeting on 7 May that International Women's Year will "begin a new era when all of humanity, not half of it, will participate in the effort to solve the problems facing the world today".

In her statement, Ms. Sipilä asked: "How can the world solve its increasing problems of economic and social development, and improve the quality of human life, when hundreds of millions of its children, the new generation of mankind, are born to illiterate, uneducated, untrained mothers who traditionally are responsible for the upbringing of children? How can the world increase its food production, when agricultural work is still in large areas of the world, mainly the responsibility of women, who are not only untrained and unequipped, but have to do this work in addition to their heavy responsibilities as mothers and homemakers? How can the world solve its population problems... if women do not change their reproductive behaviour?

"International Women's Year will be a time to translate into action the principle of equality of men and women, clearly stated in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, without which no development effort is likely to succeed," Ms. Sipilä added.

(more)



### Resolution

The General Assembly resolution, adopted on 18 December 1972 designating 1975 as International Women's Year, sets three main goals for the Year:

- To promote equality between men and women;
- To ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort, especially by emphasizing women's responsibility and important role in economic, social and cultural development at the national, regional and international levels, particularly during the Second United Nations Development Decade; and
- To recognize the importance of women's increasing contribution to the development of friendly relations and co-operation among States, and to the strengthening of world peace.

### Background

Plans for International Women's Year are being made against a background of uneven progress of women throughout the world. Over 120 countries have given women the right to vote and to participate in the political life of the country -- many since 1945. This leaves only a few countries in which women do not share this right, yet participation of women in the decision-making processes of government is still extremely low. Further, in judiciaries, diplomatic life, administration, executive, trade, industry and government, top posts are still held by men, while women for the most part are relegated to lower paid and lesser skilled jobs.

This situation is the same at international level. At the last General Assembly of the United Nations, for example, there were only about 180 women compared to 2,369 male delegates (some 7 per cent). Fifty-five delegations had no woman representative and forty-four only one.

In agriculture, technical advances have, in some cases, actually demoted the status of women, not improved it. A recent report of the Associated Country Women of the World, submitted this year to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, stated:

"The mechanization of many agricultural operations means that in many countries men are now taking over much of the work previously left to the women. So with development, women can find themselves demoted and in an inferior position within the rural community, having less control over the resulting produce and the cash from its sale."

The same report states that the larger farming units frequently formed to meet the exigencies of the "Green Revolution" employ men almost exclusively.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has shown that in the large majority of countries -- developed as well as developing -- women are educationally disadvantaged, whether it be at the primary, secondary

(more)



or higher levels of education. The number of illiterate adults in the world still exceed 800 million and most of these are women, ranging in some areas to as high as 80 to 85 per cent of the total. Lack of educational opportunities and training touches off a chain reaction and perpetuates discrimination in other fields, especially employment.

According to Ms. M. Bruce, Deputy Director of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, "it is often claimed that men should have preferential treatment in employment, as well as higher remuneration, because they have to support families. This claim, however, often poses a danger to the very men it is designed to protect -- the danger that women, rather than men, will be hired by employers who wish to cut down labour costs.

"Moreover, many women, including those who are widowed, divorced, separated or abandoned, are themselves heads of families and the sole support of their children. They frequently lack the skills and training needed to enable them to make adequate provision for their children.

"Within the family, despite the progress made, under many legal systems and certainly in practice, the male is still the dominant partner, and his word is final in any major decisions concerning matters affecting the family and its members. Even in advanced industrial nations surveys have shown that working women actually put in more than 65 hours of work a week, considering the additional time for housework and are still grossly overburdened with the many tasks that are theirs through practice and tradition."

#### Action Proposals

Recommended changes to improve women's lot include improved opportunities for education and training of all levels, more resources for adult education programmes, increased participation in non-governmental activities, especially trade unions and co-operatives. These areas are expected to receive emphasis from many organizations within the United Nations system during the Year, including the United Nations itself and such bodies as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNESCO, as well as non-governmental organizations.

It is also hoped that nations will take the opportunity to ratify the many International Conventions which proclaim the principle of equal rights of women and men.

These include: The Convention on the Political Rights of Women, 1952 (27 states parties have ratified to date); the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, 1957 (46 states parties); the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, 1962 (26 states parties); the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (40 states parties); the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (82 states parties); the Convention on the Recovery Abroad of Maintenance (35 states parties); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (26 states parties); and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (16 states parties).

(more)

So far, 74 members of the United Nations have become states parties to the International Labour Organisation's Convention on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, while 77 are states parties to the Convention on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation. The UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education, which specifically mentions sex, has 59 states parties, less than half UNESCO's membership.

\* \* \* \* \*